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ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
Royal College of Dental Surgeons,
ONTARIO.

ADDRESS
BY W. GEORGE BEERS, L.D.S.

Reprinted from the Dominion Dental Journal, April, 1890.

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Mr. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—When I accepted the invitation to join the boys to-night, in a ceremony which might make the mouths of the founders of Canadian dental reform water with envy, I thought at first it was to be a quiet sort of family farewell, where one could unbend a bit, like teachers and pupils who both love football; and yet, where one's gray hairs would perhaps entitle him to talk kindly, like a father, experienced words of caution with the warmest words of cheer. I flattered myself that the task would be light and congenial, and that the happy graduates would endure me, because it was to be the very last of a long list of lectures they had survived, and because, too, they might hope to catch from one's confessions, some of the needed warnings which active practitioners have "learned in suffering to sing in song," and for which I know I would have been grateful when I first launched forth eager for the fray, to set the world on fire. You know there's nothing running to such waste as the burning passion to bestow advice. It is a perfect drug in the market of moral ethics. It is a possession with which even misers are extravagant. It would not be difficult then, to give our graduates the

benefit of one's own mistakes, in order that they might avoid them, and to point out those faults and follies of a professional career through which most of us have had for discipline to pass. It was formerly a superstition that every child should have measles, chicken-pox, and croup, just as the belief exists to-day in some parts of the Province of Quebec that physical life is not complete without variola. In much the same way, it seems to be a heresy to deny, that a man can steer clear of reefs and rocks against which the most of voyagers strike; but were this true, and were the beacons and signals of no avail, would not every shoal and lee-shore of life be strewn with human wrecks, and many a hopeful heart perish in despair? There are perils of a peculiar character in the practice of dentistry, and pitfalls of more than ordinary obscurity; there are duties a man will specially owe to himself and his own nest and nestlings, superior to those that can possibly belong to the public, however nobly unselfish, and willing a man may be to lay down his life, if needs be, for his brethren; there are perplexities and temptations, and there are splendid occasions to do the duty of unselfish, earnest and truthful men. But, however parsimonious of self-praise, or prodigal of self-censure, the telling of all this would dispose us to be before our confreres; we do not like to make a public exposure of our own imperfections, or even successes, before the patients.

And it was enough to take one's breath away to learn, at the eleventh hour, that I was to be permitted, for at least thirty minutes this evening, to be "intoxicated with the exuberance of my own verbosity," and in such a literary, legislative and university centre as this advancing city, and in presence of distinguished gentlemen, whose public life makes speechifying to them mere child's play, and who, if they talk in their sleep, do so, I am sure, with classic and Corinthian polish.

However, Mr. President, with all the dangers and drawbacks before me, were I to say that I am sorry to find myself here, then like Montaigne's page, I "would not be found guilty of telling the truth." It is indeed a great personal pleasure to be allowed to add another link to the long chain of my connection with the dental movement in Ontario; to meet face to face and hand to hand, a new detachment of earnest and leavening recruits, bound in dentistry in this Province to do, not to dream, and who seriously mean in

zeal and honesty, to do some such service for their profession, and therefore for our great Dominion, as has been done for law and medicine by our University teachers, and for our trade and commerce by our educated agriculturists and merchants. We have lately commemorated in Ontario and Quebec the events which led to our first educational efforts twenty-one years ago, and I confess I like to look back on the coincidence, perfectly freed from any political thought, that the birth of this reform in Ontario was contemporaneous with that of the Dominion, and that when our statesmen were in session in Charlottetown discussing the union of the Provinces, our Ontario dentists were in session in Toronto, planning the reform and consolidation of the profession. It was a pioneer work, like that done by the first settlers of this Province along the shores of the St. Lawrence, Bay of Quinte, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, when the rude log-hut, the yoke of steers, a pig, a gun and an axe formed the stock-in-trade, perhaps, of the fathers of some of the gentlemen here ; and we, whose lives are cast to-day in pleasanter places, have good right to revere and respect those old-fashioned days of sturdy hearts and wooden ploughs. There are a few practitioners still in our ranks who were practising dentistry in Canada before most of us were born, and when I have heard from their lips the struggles they had to endure, as they perambulated the country with their box on their back like modern rural peddlers ; when I even recall the regular custom in Montreal when I was indentured as a student, and was notarially bound not to reveal to our rivals "the secrets" of the profession ; when we contrast those days with the present free-offering which every respectable dentist makes of his knowledge ; when we compare the past in Ontario, within the memory of confreres who are here to-night, with the success achieved in its teens by this school, with the proud affiliation with one of the leading Universities of the Dominion, giving for the first time in the dental history of the Empire, a distinctive and unsullied dental degree, I feel that the responsible stewards of this institution have not only done an enduring service to the profession, but a practical one for the State. I have had constant and active association with the profession from that important epoch, and I know the sacrifices the promoters of legislation and education had to make. I was familiar with the unreasonable opposition of well-meaning sceptics, who had no more

faith that a dental Act of Incorporation would elevate dentistry in Ontario, than that a charter would avail to secure a railway to the moon. I remember the war-whoops of hate raised by a few, who condemned a principle in dentistry they unconsciously commended in medicine and law ; and who, had they been in the wilderness with Moses, would, I firmly believe, have fought against the passage of the Ten Commandments, as an unnecessary and dangerous piece of legislation. Even many who to-day loyally acknowledge the value, and aid the objects of association, then stood silent in fear. It was thought by the most moderate opponent that legislation was impracticable ; that the idea of a school was Quixotic, for "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*:" that it could become nothing better than a fickle and feeble imitation of the clap-trap system, which was then manufacturing Doctors of Dental Surgery over the border in one session of four months. It was said that a dental school in Toronto would have to pawn its parchments to pay its way ; that it would have to hawk its degrees about the Province for sale, and, as was satirically said of the diploma of a foreign College, that it would thus "be enabled to get rid of its debt—by 'Degrees.'" Those were the prophets of despair, who seem to have lineal descendants in other spheres of our national life ; whose crest should be "the white feather ;" who have as many hands as Gyges to raise against the gods ; and who, at least, seem like men standing on their heads, to see everything the wrong way. The success we see to-day is due to the fact that Ontario dentistry has leaders of quiet faith and earnest courage, who have quitted themselves like men. Had our friend Dr. Willmot and his associates shaped their actions on the fear or fury of obstructionists, you, gentlemen, would have had to pick up your experience in the Province in the old imperfect way, or cross the lines to get what you could not get here. There is neither exuberance of fancy nor exaggeration of fact in these statements. The gentlemen who shouldered the responsibility of conducting this school, did not imagine that the mere readiness was sufficient professional equipment, or that their duty should be set to music. They had not the presumption of the son of the Vicar of Wakefield—a chip of the old block—who, you remember, went to Amsterdam to teach the Dutch English, but who found when he got there that he had forgotten to learn Dutch. Your lecturers qualified themselves

to teach. You have received didactic instruction, in this first Dental School in Canada, equal to any you could get on this continent ; and if some features are not as yet made as attainable as in colleges in the United States, remember that one of those foreign schools has just passed its fiftieth year ; that others have had twenty-five, thirty and forty years of existence, as richly endowed institutions in large and populous States. And yet not one of these colleges has so far exacted anything like the high standard of matriculation, or the conditions of studentship demanded of students in Ontario and Quebec. The D.D.S. of Canada so far represents an educational standard as to preliminary examination, only surpassed by the requirements of the Dentists' Act in England ; and if we believe that general cultivation and a liberal education is as necessary to the highest sphere of success in medicine and law, it cannot logically be denied in its application to the highest attainments in dentistry, if our teaching, our associations and our literature are to expand. It is patent to us all that under the primitive system of training students, the profession produced many excellent men ; some whose native genius and ingenuity "burst the bars of invidious birth, and broke the force of circumstance ;" but the future of the profession will be settled on a higher plane, by the preservation, or even the increase of the standard of the admission examination. No fact in connection with education in the medical, dental, law, and even many of the theological schools of the United States, seemed to a Canadian more inexplicable, than the absence, until about twelve years ago, of any sort of preliminary. To such an extent was this neglect carried, that not only were thousands of men graduated as doctors and dentists, ignorant of the most elementary branches of an English education, but up to the last few years, diplomas were conferred upon men of foreign speech, who did not understand one word of the language in which the lectures were delivered. Though our American cousins have not raised the standard of the preliminary to that of Canada and England, we must congratulate them upon the proposed increase in the period of study ; and it will probably not be deemed altogether a breach of the unpretending modesty which in some respects we feel towards the older and more richly endowed United States schools, if we recall the historical fact that the first movement towards the abolition of a pro-

vision which recognized five years of any sort of practice as equivalent to one session, was the direct result of the peremptory action of the Quebec Board, in cutting off from recognition two of the leading schools for too elastic an interpretation of this provision. In a measure our humble efforts in Canada, even years ago, were fairly received over the boarder, but my conviction still exists, that the American diploma of D.D.S. had no claim for recognition until the abolition of the five years' clause, and the exaction of a preliminary. I think what I have said may, perhaps, elevate the respect you should entertain for the degrees you have received to-night; and it is well to remember that towards this school and the profession in Canada you now have reciprocal duties to perform. Have faith in your own Canadian school as you have in your own Province and in the Dominion, and if defects appear, do not imitate the folly of the farmer who, failing to reach the caterpillar, cut down the ancestral tree, under whose spreading boughs he had been soothed by a mother's lullaby. And if circumstances, which no man can always foresee, force you to seek foreign founts of inspiration, or perhaps of life-work, even though the collective wisdom of the "Associated Dental Faculties" refuse to recognize the plea of your parchment for professional union, generous and noble cousins, whose warm hearts and open hands have often aided our movement in Canada, will be the first to wish you "God speed."

Is it not a suggestive reflection that dentistry, as a recognized science, is the youngest of the professions, and that there are gentlemen in this room, in the prime of life, who were born before the first dental association, the first dental college, and the first dental journal? Medicine can trace its history back to the early periods of Grecian civilization. The medical schools of Cos, Rhodes, Cyrene, and Croton date back from 400 B.C. Hippocrates, "the father of medicine," was 500 B.C. Law goes back to the schools of jurists in the reign of Tarquin, 448 B.C. Enthusiastic dental antiquarians, who will never be happy until they believe they have disinterred excavators and pluggers used in the Ark, try to make some bold statements of Herodotus, and passing remarks of later writers, give color to the belief that ancient Egypt was the cradle of dentistry. It was declared that gold fillings had been found in the teeth of mummies from Thebes, but it was discovered that, like other parts of the mummies, the teeth

had been merely gilded. It is a fact, however, that the idea of replacing lost human teeth by substitutes of bone or sycamore wood set in gold, has been traced to Egypt by modern discoverers in ancient sarcophagi; and, I dare say, that some of you may have seen and handled the specimens in possession of our friend and confrere, Dr. Barrett, of Buffalo. These do not, however, substantiate any claim whatever that the work was done by specialists in dentistry, but more certainly by the ordinary gold and silversmiths, who, for instance, worked in the great synagogue at Alexandria, and who, as in Jerusalem and other places, divided the working of metals into separate branches. It is easy for you to draw upon your imagination—that is what it is for—and picture to yourself an Eastern beauty standing before the framer of a buckle or an ear-ring, and, as she perhaps smiles at his blandishments and blarney, discovers to the goldsmith the loss of an incisor. With instinctive ingenuity, and no doubt a lively sense of friendship to come, he offers to carve a substitute of bone to fill the gap, as he carved the buckle, and then fasten it to the adjacent teeth, as he would fit the ear-ring, by golden loops. Still, we must let our antiquarian dentists amuse themselves; and when you remember that the Jewish Rabbins aver that the worms of the grave have no power over Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Benjamin, and David, it is not unlikely that some Chicago dentist, disguised as a Turk, strolling through Hebron, should excavate some ancient molars from a burrow, and believing they were those of Abraham, Jacob, and Miriam, contribute them to the attractions of the next "World's Exposition." Or perhaps, some of our Toronto graduates, when hunting deer or fishing for trout in the Laurentides, which Sir William Dawson's fossil discoveries verify as the oldest parts of Creation, should discover that Dental Bridge work is contemporaneous with the *Eozoon Canadense*.

But, seriously, the progress of dentistry—especially instrumental and mechanical—within the recollection of the first students of this school, has been marvellous. Young practitioners would no more think of accepting most of the theories and methods of treatment prevalent twenty years ago, than they would adopt the vagaries and materia medica of Celsus. And yet, I fear, we go into raptures without sound reason, over the claims that many make as to the progress of the purely scientific on this continent. We cannot

deny that the most scientific and profound literature in our specialty is altogether foreign to our hemisphere ; that until certain books were compiled to order, some of which are bare-faced plagiarisms of British or German productions, American dental colleges were taught the science of dentistry from these foreign text-books. Most of our advancement has been made along mechanical lines, the mere prosthetic, and little or nothing in the investigation of those embryonic conditions which lie at the base of the predisposing causes of poorly calcified teeth. No complaint of this sort can be made as to the study of the relation of fermentation to caries, the fungi of the mouth, etc., so carefully investigated by Dr. W. D. Miller, of Berlin, Germany ; but when we reflect that the special disease of caries is increasing in all civilized countries, not merely like a transient epidemic, which we prepare to battle with until we can safely predict its disappearance, but as a physiological certainty in by far the largest proportion of healthy children of healthy parents ; when we consider the fact that probably not a hundred people could be found in this city between the ages of fifteen and twenty who have escaped diseased teeth, and that the majority of children do not attain their sixth year free from this calamity, when we reflect upon this connection of caries with a period when nutrition is most active, and "decay" should be anomalous, it would seem that there is here a neglected field for scientific research. I look with horror on such statements, that in one dental office, or rather *about* in New York, 15,000 teeth were extracted last year ; that from to five tons of gold, forty-five of silver and tin, besides several tons of other plastics, were used in the United States alone last year ; while it is estimated that 6,000,000 of artificial teeth were inserted, and 20,000,000 of human teeth sacrificed by neglect.

Where is this to end ? Is the hypothesis, founded upon the laws of descent and adaptation, that the offspring of those who have lost their teeth early, might be born without tooth-germs, to become probable ? Is there to be a generation born without teeth, as they say our distant ancestors predicted that which has come to pass, that their distant successors would be born without tails ? Can we grow better teeth ? Can we do anything to control nutrition during the formative period ? What are the disturbing and favoring influences of calcification ? Do you not think that the imper-

fect character of dental education on this continent has had the most to do with our solid ignorance on such important questions?

As the youngest country on this continent, we have no reason to be ashamed of our position. Naturally enough, the organization of the profession occupied the chief attention. Quebec's effort in 1842 to secure legislative protection died still-born. It followed the lead of Ontario in 1869; but if you had the misfortune to be obliged to deal with its Local Legislature, and to meet the many peculiar intrigues with which hungry lawyers and unscrupulous applicants are able to confront the Association, you would thank your stars more than you do, that dentistry in this Province is not at its mercy. With the two official languages, and a French majority, it gives me the greatest pleasure to say, that in the twenty-one years of our existence we have never had one syllable of national discord, and that French and English are as honest friends to each other as brothers can possibly be. Manitoba, British Columbia, and the North-West Territories now have legislative protection. New Brunswick has made a move, which, we trust, will pull all the Maritime Provinces into line.

I feel I have exhausted you, if not my time. Some of our guests may think that, as a body, we vastly overestimate our professional significance and work; but I am reminded of a recent remark of Her Majesty the Queen to Sir Edwin Saunders, her Household Dentist: "Yours is a very important profession, for while some need the skill of the oculist and aurist, almost all need that of the dentist." If in any sense dentistry in Canada is popularly depreciated it may be largely our own fault; but I know no better way to change this misfortune, than through the education and appreciation of medical men, who come into earlier contact with family ailment, and who really have exclusive opportunity to warn and advise as to the care and importance of the teeth. With some such co-operation, the ethical and financial questions would solve themselves, and it would not be a dentist's impending fate, as was said of the English curate, that he will likely become "the best educated pauper in the parish." As the graduates of this school increase in number, and spread throughout the land, this educational intimacy will become more easy; the public will learn to believe that the loss of the teeth is a loss of function; that their preservation from youth to old age is possible, and that there is something better

under the sun, in the way of artificial substitutes, than the "Cheap Jack" vulcanite fiend has the ability to supply.

It may not have occurred to you that, as a profession, we deal with the most prevalent disease of the age; a disease which may begin in the cradle, and follow ninety per cent. of its victims through the seven ages to the grave. Do you not think then, that if the Canadian public as intelligently appreciated their teeth as our neighbors, that Canada could maintain twice the number of dentists? And yet we know that, as a fact, it is a poorly paid profession. All through the old Province of Quebec, the forceps of the country physician suffices for the dental demands of ninety-five per cent. of the rural population; and one would imagine that the sneer of Robespierre during the French Revolution, when he was asked and refused to spare the life of the eminent chemist, Lavoisier, whom he sent to the guillotine, had become paraphrased: "The Republic doesn't want chemists."—"The Province doesn't want dentists."

Gentlemen graduates, before we part, let me say a word on a subject which is always in order, from the mother's lap to the school-room; from the University halls to the very pulpits. We may differ as to what, and where, and how Christianity should be interpreted. We are sure to sympathize with Charles XII., when, after failing to make twelve watches run together, he was struck with the folly of trying to make all men think alike on matters of religion. But if we are sincere, above baser party ties, to promote the weal of the land we live in, that it might become great, glorious and free, then neither race, nor religion, nor color can separate us from the duty we owe to do some patriotic service for our land. What boots it to the soldier in battle whether or not the comrade beside him worships at his shrine? but it matters much to him whether or not he will be true or traitor. I sometimes fear that a portion of our political press and the army of our political tramps would bring us to that state of society to which Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, alluded in his History of Rome, "where patriotism becomes impossible—the inner life being so exhausted as to inspire the citizen with neither respect nor attachment." I feel I owe no apology for reminding you that, as good citizens, you owe loyalty and patriotism wherever you dwell.

It is wise and worthy to start into professional life hopefully and honestly. You need not think you can make short cuts, or take

crooked ways. If you do, you will lose time, and will have to come back and start again straight. It is better to have too much enthusiasm in your profession, than too much contempt ; better to broaden your life-work and thought by collateral culture, than to circumscribe it by narrow views. It is better to build castles in the air—and doubtless you'll build many—than not to build at all ; better to sing Psalms with the professional Davids, than grunt Lamentations with the professional Jeremiahs ; better every day to turn introspective thoughts as a moral duty, in search of your own peccadilloes, than to think you can win popularity or renown by insidiously hunting for those of others. It is better to be even a second or third class dentist, than to imagine that you and the Premier are misplaced, and that he is in your place ; better, and happier, and healthier, a thousand times, in the long run, to feel that your every-day duty, for which you've here been trained, is exactly the appointed work God has given you to do. And if you feel impelled to kick up a dust in Olympus, and cheek the gods and teach humanity what nobody else has been able to tell it, go first and talk it over with some quiet woman—your mother, if God has spared her—and I fancy you'll come back with your metaphorical tail between your legs. Remember we are here to-night just to lift you tenderly and cheerfully out of your professional cradle. We have taken away your feeding-bottle ; we've covered you with parchment, and given you "God bless you." In fact, professionally, you've been born, baptized and married all at one stroke : and take now one of the first, oldest and best hints that has been given to man since the world was created : Take a silent partner—you probably have already one in view—who will love you, and encourage you, and help you, and swear by you, even if you go home like a cowardly brute and beat her with a stick.

As a guest who rejoices in witnessing to your marriage to dentistry, let me tell you that even in the days of your professional honeymoon, you will have days of doubt and difficulty, but dutiful courage and cheerfulness always bring palmy days. You may believe me that you could not be happy unless you were sometimes miserable, just as you'll never have true success unless you have occasional failure. You will get your dose of discipline like the rest of us, but stand it like men, and you'll confess that you got it just where it was needed when the clouds roll by. You'll have

days of despair, perhaps, when you'll lie on your back and almost wish you were in your coffin, but duty and courage transmute them into days of happiness, when you wouldn't change this lovely earth for any premature hope of heaven. It will often compensate you in arduous work, in which no man in Canada ever became rich, to feel that you do humanity a daily service ; that every day you prevent or ease pain, and that if you give pain, it is only that pain may cease. Now, gentlemen, to work. There is your duty. The dentist waits in his office. The procession will soon begin for you. The healthiest infant, as well as the invalid, the richest as well as the poorest ; the worthiest scholar, the wisest *savant*, the greatest statesmen, even the kings and queens of earth must walk in, take their place in the chair, and submit to sit before us, with open mouth. I think it is quite time for me to close mine.



